# Introduction

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The launch of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in 2014 by the United Nations had been anticipated in the context of the organisation's reiterated concerns about ensuring global food safety and alleviating hunger and poverty worldwide. In turn, according to the UN's demographic projections, the world's population is to increase to 9 billion by 2050, implying the necessity to double the extent of agricultural production. Such an increase of production is likely to enlarge the pressure on arable land and the availability of water supplies, which would endanger the vision of sustainable farming and development in general. However, the predictions that, in the context of the global market economy, industrialised farming organised in a corporate form would replace family-run farming have failed.

It is not surprising that the principal messages of the campaign inform the "world audience" that family farming with approximately 500 million family farms in developing and developed countries remains the predominant form of agriculture, that family farmers are important part of the solution for a world free from poverty and hunger, and that only family farming, through its socio-economic, environmental and cultural roles, maintains sustainable development (Main Messages 2014).

The notion of "development" in the campaign's promotion echoes the imagined future of improved well-being, livelihoods, and opportunities, but only if settings of "appropriate policy" are established. Outlining the vision and objectives of the IYFF, the Master Plan of the campaign explicitly addresses governments to establish the 'enabling environment (conducive policies, adequate legislation, participatory planning for a policy dialogue, investments) for the sustainable development of family farming' (Master Plan 2014: 3). Moreover, 'highlighting "success stories", good polices and best practices' (ibid.: 4) is an envisioned IYFF activity based on the assumption that 'poor family farms can quickly deploy their productivity potential when the appropriate policy environment is effectively put in place' (Main Messages 2014).

Such appeals and explications may easily lead to reasoning that 'success stories' may serve as directly transferable models for others to follow or for external agencies to impose in various social settings. However, they may offer valuable lessons if comparatively by detailed analyses ascertain how general tendencies interact with specific conditions to produce particular outcomes (Byers 1996). Such reasoning questions a common trajectory path of development, seeing it instead as a concept with its own history.

*ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS* 20 (3): 5–8.
ISSN 1408-032X

Concerns that have occupied numerous scholars from various intellectual backgrounds since the 18th century, e.g. what types of faith in progress motivate development theories and practices, or, what kind of development and for whom – seem more than pertinent in today's discussions on contemporary "free-market" neoliberal economic policies, especially when fused with debates on agricultural globalization (Edelman & Haugerud 2010). Today, several scholars emphasize that the recent concurrence of various crises – financial, food, energy and environmental – has placed the nexus between "rural development" and "development in general" again in the centre of theoretical, policy and political agendas worldwide (Borras 2010). Global political and economic changes, which are also mirrored in the agrarian field in the previous four decades, are attributed by scholars to the deregulation of financial markets, shifts in the production, sourcing and sales strategies and technologies of transnational manufacturing and agribusiness, to mention just a few. These changes were to irreversibly alter the "old" international division of labour within the agro-food system, and additionally, increase inequality within and between countries in the world. However, some authors see the main reason that inequality is under-communicated in mainstream development discourses in the difficulty to conceptualise it within the neoclassical language of prescriptive commodification and individual choice. Despite often voiced concerns that the interpretations of agrarian transformations and the strategies adopted to influence these transformations are politically contested, some authors believe that this should not prevent researchers from investigating "real world politics" and engaging with development practitioners and activists for a transformative and mutually empowering co-production of knowledge, its dissemination and use (e.g. Borras 2010). Doing such a vision of knowledge co-production, the researchers are expected to investigate actual circumstances in the rural world, and critically reflect upon the existent "bottle necks" in their knowledge exchange. Such ambition may be recognised from the articles in this special issue of *Anthropological Notebooks*.

Katherine A. Snyder and Beth Cullen offer critical analysis of external sustainable intensification interventions in African smallholder farming, drawing on field material from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana. Offering wider social, cultural, political and biophysical contexts of family farms in the observed locations, the authors tackle the question of why mostly technical experts fail in their efforts to increase food production in these settings without causing environmental degradation. The reader will learn why the in-depth understanding of realities of farming in rural Africa is crucial to current approaches to agricultural research for development, and why it is necessary to shift the researchers' focus towards participatory approaches that 'empower farmers and farmer organizations, encourage capacity development and pay greater attention to institutional and policy issues.'

Michael Woods provides an analysis of a relatively small number of family farmers in their contrasting response to globalization of agriculture. Drawing on ethnographic evidence from several research projects involving farmers from Australia, New Zealand and the UK, the author employs a relational perspective. In this perspective, farmers are discussed as 'having capacities to influence the outcomes of globalization,' by initiating their own global connections through their entrepreneurial engagement or relocation of their farm business to a different country, or by 'resisting and subverting' global agricultural networks and processes

participating in protest movements. Explaining adoption of farmers' "footloose strategy", this article also challenges the overstated 'spatial fixity' as a vital identity marker of family farms, emphasising the desire to continue with the family business instead.

Christina Grasseni offers a reflection essay with ethnographic examples on what she calls 'the reinvention of food' in marginal rural areas, focusing on the issue of re-localizing food products as an alternative to the global corporate agri-food system. Via a thorough description of the emerging collaboration between alternative provisioning networks in Italy and smallholders, the "limits and potentials" of becoming involved in such networks for family farms are examined. The reader will learn which strategies, talents, spatio-temporal imaginaries, narratives, values, and political sentiments producers and provisioners activate in their common effort to re-engineer a short supply food chain, and to revitalize local and regional economies.

Changed farming circumstances in the last forty years in Europe, which are mirrored in increasing women's employment outside the farm, Sally Shortall investigates through "doing" gender and working identities in family farms' couples. Drawing on qualitative data from the updated study on women's engagement with the European Rural Development Programme in Northern Ireland, the author discusses 'whether gender mainstreaming is transformative, and challenges the status quo' – the still persistent family farm discourse on distinct gender identities – even though male and female working positions on the farm have changed.

In their article, Alenka Bartulović and Miha Kozorog discuss the complex motivations of Slovenian family farmers to take up organic farming before and after Slovenia joined the EU (2004). Despite the fact that the national agricultural ministry has favoured more "sustainable" organic farming to preserve the environment, landscape and quality food (since two-thirds of agricultural land is found in hilly and mountainous areas), two ethnographic case studies inform the reader about the complex set of personal, family, financial, institutional drivers for collective and individual conversion to organic farming in two (pre)Alpine micro-locations. The authors focus their comparative analyses on "turning points" of the conversion process, reflecting both obstacles and opportunities for the development of the preferred form of family farming in mountainous Slovenia.

The last essay tackles the issue of family farming development through reflection on the agricultural knowledge transfer system in Slovenia. Duška Knežević Hočevar and Majda Černič Istenič situate the functioning of the knowledge transfer system – recognised by the national strategy of agricultural development as a key driver of increased family farming productivity and competitiveness – in the context of pursuing the vision of a knowledge-based Slovenia. The authors focus their analysis on the understandings of potentials and limits of knowledge transfer by "knowledge providers" from faculties and secondary schools, who are expected to find easier paths towards the users and consumers of their knowledge, and to respond quickly to societal problems. The reader will learn why the anticipated routes of academics are hindered or successful in imagining such a society.

Having briefly related these essays to the envisioned ambitions of the Year of Family Farming, it is hoped that they can contribute to one of the campaign's key objectives – to increase knowledge on 'the diversity and the complexity of production and consumption systems in family farming.'

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